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965 words

THE OBVIOUS CHOICE: A PERSONALITY SKETCH
OF "CURLY" DALKE

by Joe Bustillos

Intended Audience: CSUF publication or local religious publication.

Topic statement: If God were into obvious choices, he would have chosen anyone else before "Curly" Dalke to be his spokesman.

The story goes that God sent his prophet Samuel out to Bethlehem to choose a king for ancient Israel from among the sons of Jesse.

Political leaders being chosen for the same reasons in those days as they are today, Samuel was more than a little confused when God told him to pass over the obvious choice, Jesse's eldest son.

God told Samuel:

Double spaced and handwritten
Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

Seven sons later, a ruddy youngster named David was anointed God's chosen one and marched off into history.

Another ruddy little individual, "Curly" Dalke, has occupied the same spot on CSUF's campus with card table and folding chairs for the last six years. He has staked his life on God's disdain for what others consider to be the obvious choice.

In 1975 Dalke was told by his doctor that he had two to five years to live. He has the "Elephant Man's" disease (Neurofibromatosis or von Recklinghausen's syndrome) which causes

fibrous tumors on the nerve endings. These tumors can appear all over the body including the spinal cord and the brain.

Neurofibromatosis is incurable. Treatment is limited to dealing with the symptoms that the disease produces. The disease often proves fatal when it attacks the skeletal system near the respiratory system, making it impossible for the victim to breath. The other area of concern is when it attacks the skull, weakening the structure and creating pressure on the brain similar to a head trauma. In 1975 Dalke underwent surgery to treat a tumor that had formed on his brain. His doctor's prediction came after surgery.

Dalke says:

By the world's standards I am supposed to be blind, paralyzed and mentally deficient. A large part of my brain is destroyed, and yet I'm here, still attending college . . . There's no reason [that] I should be here.

Actually, in Dalke's mind there is a definite reason why he's still here. He had been studying commercial photography at Rio Hondo community college and Los Angeles Trade Tech and planned to return to his studies following surgery. Dalke added, "But then I realized that God has something different for my life."

That the plans of God would loom large in the life ^{of} an individual who has faced a fatal disease is not unusual. But Dalke's particular perspective is something that took root in him long before those fateful days in 1975.

One time, at the tender age of four, an often mischievous Dalke was sent to his room as a precautionary measure. His parents were entertaining guests for the evening. Outside the bedroom window was a gallon jug that his parents used to make sunshine tea. Of course the inevitable happened, the jug broke itself. It just jumped right off that window sill and shattered into a million pieces of it's own irrational accord. The story didn't go over so well, Dalke confessed his crime and received his just punishment.

*well-
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I realized that I'd disobeyed my mother. I was punished and I realized, at that age, that something had happened between Curly and Jesus. I asked my mother if . . . Jesus will forgive me. She led me in a simple child's prayer for forgiveness.

A simple child's prayer in the most literal of senses---Dalke's mother, who had once wanted to be a missionary, was the ideal person to help her little son express his faith. He is quick to add that "it's not that my parents did [this] and so I decided to do it. I had a firm commitment to the Lord. I gave my life to Jesus."

Following his brain surgery, this life now being that much more precious to him, he left LA Trade Tech and enrolled at Grace Bible Institute in Long Beach. Before leaving Grace, where he received a B.A. in biblical studies in 1980, Dalke became involved in an enterprise that is often misunderstood by Jews and non-Christians, Jewish evangelism.

"I have always had a burden . . . for the Jewish people and a love for Israel," Dalke said. According to various

organizations involved with Jewish evangelism, such as Jews-for-Jesus or the organization Dalke is affiliated with, Chosen People ministries, the Jewish evangelist isn't interested in replacing the Jewish persons faith but in "completing" it by introducing the Jewish person to his Jewish messiah, Jesus.

These days one will find Dalke at his post Monday through Thursday from nine a.m. often past five p.m. greeting those that pass by or having friendly animated conversation with the few who sit on one of his two folding chairs. Not a rabble rousing John the Baptist-type, Dalke feels most at home dealing with people one-to-one.

He says of his post:

It has become a meeting ground for Christians . . . A place of security, a place of certainty. They know that Curly will be here. At a community college that's the one thing that the students need, something small that they know will be there. Everything changes and changes and changes, and they say that there's nothing really stable in their lives."

Given his fragile health, given his speech impediment, it would seem that God has made another dubious choice if he has chosen Dalke to be his spokesman at CSUF. Flashing a wicked grin and reflecting on the legacy of a previous ruddy fellow whom God had chose, Dalke is likely to quote his favorite verse:

For God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong. (1 Cor. 1:27)

Joe,

You did a good job here.

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